AIPAC SPEECH 2013 – MINISTER OF DEFENSE

EHUD BARAK (2,201 WORDS) – DRAFT 7

- Thank you for such a warm welcome.
- What an indescribable feeling to be surrounded by so many **true friends** in the capital of the world's greatest democracy.
- Members of the Administration, Members of Congress, distinguished ambassadors …. Michael, Rosey, Bob, David, Howard and Richard, AIPAC members… older and young…
- Good evening to **you all** and thank you for having me.
- Members of Congress,It is **your** toil and **your** graft – **your** unwavering support – that keeps ***us*** safe. I have six humble words for all of you: Thank you, thank you, thank you.
- I would like to express my personal appreciation to President Obama and Secretary Panetta for their **resolute** backing of Israel.

- History will surely record your immeasurable contribution to the **strength** of Israel and the

maintenance of the **truly** special relationship between our peoples.

- On behalf of the people of Israel, I wish Secretary Hagel **all the best** in his new role.
- As Secretary of Defense he will no doubt **serve his country** with the **same pride** and **honor** with which he served both on the battlefield and in Congress.
- I am surprised to see **so many young activists**. Thank you for **your energetic** (and loud) commitment to Israel!
- A **commitment** which is so lucidly **dictated** by the **head**… yet so deeply underpinned by the **heart**…
- This display of **united strength** and **solidarity** in the **face** of determined rivals is crucial to both **win wars**… and **maintain peace**.
- It is thanks to the **rock solid** US-Israel relationship, and the devotion of the young men and women in the uniform of the IDF, that our capacity to defend ourselves, that is to say - Israel's 'Qualitative – Military – Edge', has been guaranteed for years to come!
- With **US** support and the **ingenuity** of our scientists, Israel finds itself at the cutting edge of missile defense technology.

- The ‘Iron Dome’ recently intercepted over 400 incoming terrorist rockets. Shot them out of the sky!
- It is the equivalent of hitting a bullet with a bullet!
- Just last week on the shores of the Mediterranean, we – the US **and** Israel – conducted a successful exo-atmospheric flight test of the new Arrow 3 interceptor. This will shoot ballistic missiles out of space!
- The State of Israel simply would not be **the strong island of stability** without one crucial **constant.**
- YOU
- The United States of America. Its people. Its leadership. Its Jewish community.
- The US and Israel are more than friends. We are family. We look **after** each other. And we will continue to look **out** for each other.

- We live in a tough neighborhood.

- I will never grow tired of repeating these harsh realities: Where **we** live, there is **no mercy for the weak**. There **is no second chance** for those who cannot defend themselves.
- Israel is the **strongest** country in the region and the only **genuinely open democracy**; a "villa in the jungle" as I once called it.
- We have witnessed an **unprecedented geopolitical earthquake** in the last three years – shattering the generations' old regional order.
- There are two clear lessons and one insight I have draw from this period:

    - # 1: **Be modest with predictions, especially about the future**. Take Egypt as an example; if even Mubarak was unable to predict it… who could have?

    - #2: When friends abroad– as well as certain leaders back home tell me: **Don't worry**… If worse comes to worst – the world **will not**

stand idly by – the world will come forward and act!

- My answer is: Do NOT take this for granted.
- Look at Syria – you need no intelligence; it's on your screens. Assad's jet fighters, tanks and artillery are slaughtering his own citizens. Bulldozers dig trenches into which the bodies of children, women and elderly people are piled. Over 70,000 Syrians killed.
- Yet there is still **no** sense of direction among nations, **no** unity of purpose and **no** political will to act.
- Look at North Korea –defying the whole world, and testing its nuclear devices. With no response.
- This is an extremely relevant lesson for us in Israel.

- And an **insight**…

- Many of our best friends in the world, as well as colleagues in Israel, believe that the root cause – the underlying reason – for *all* the problems in the Middle East… is our **inability** to solve the conflict with the Palestinians.
- I say… That's not true!
- Looking at recent years in the Middle East, it is clear that we are witnessing tectonic movements which are beyond our control and independent of our deeds.
- Even if a peace agreement with the Palestinians had been signed and sealed a long time ago:
    - The Muslim Brotherhood would **still** have come to power in Egypt
    - Syria would **still** be mired in a bloody civil war
    - Iran would **still** be pursuing nuclear capabilities and a hegemonic role in the Gulf
- Having said that, however, and it is **a big however**; the peace process certainly should not be ignored. And I'll come back to this in a moment…

- But **first** let's turn to the greatest challenge facing the facing Israel, the region and the world today? …

- It is Iran – **racing** towards nuclear capabilities.
- A nuclear Iran spells the end of **any** conceivable non-proliferation regime. **Saudi Arabia**, **Turkey** and later on **Egypt** will eventually follow suit.
- The countdown towards nuclear materials falling into the hands of terrorists will begin.
- Iran will increase its **sponsorship** of **terror** all over the wider Middle East. Their proxies – including **Hezbollah** in Lebanon and **Islamic Jihad** in the Gaza Strip, will be strengthened.

- We **cannot** forget that this extreme regime also threatens to wipe Israel **out the pages of history**.

- Diplomatic efforts continue, yet based on past experience… they appear to be headed towards a futile deadlock.

- Sanctions are **unprecedented and hurting**, but to tell you frankly – while exhausting all diplomatic means is understandable – I do not believe it will bring a moment of truth, where the Ayatollahs will give up their nuclear aspirations.

- Therefore, **all options must remain** on the table.

- We have stated this time and again.

- And we expect **all those** who say it… to **mean** it… ladies and gentlemen… **We mean it.**

- And I repeat it once again, **we mean it**.

- A nuclear Iran is the **most** imminent and acute danger to the stability of the **entire region**. But it is not the only one.
- There are **at least** another two:
- Islamic fundamentalist **terror** is spreading rapidly.
- Likewise, **Missile Defense** is becoming a growing need for other **moderate states** in the region
- So what is to be done?

- It is an interregnum right now in Israel and the new government will have to shape its own approach – but allow me, just before I leave, to share with you my positions.
- The Middle East is a **Gestalt** – everything depends on everything else.

- Facing the **triangle of threats** we have to:
- Firstly find a way to start building a **'Regional Security Framework'**…
- This should be built around the **common** challenges – of **radical Islamic terror**, **border security**, **missile defense**… and of course, Iran's nuclear program and its hegemonic intentions.
- Led by the US, such a **'Regional Security Framework'** could provide a **variety of synergies** for all its regional participants.
- # 2)We need a **daring peace initiative** vis-a-vis the Palestinians.
- A two-state solution is the only viable solution.
- It is a **compelling imperative** for us in order to secure **our** identity and future as a Jewish and democratic state; not a favor for the Palestinians… it is in our own self interest.
- Believe me I know from personal experience that the Palestinians are not **easy** partners for peace.
- They bear most of the responsibility for past failures.

- Well, I know a fully fledged agreement is probably not feasible today, yet… And only an assertive, sincere effort can determine this. But if this is the case; we have to try and achieve a reasonable, fair, **interim agreement**.
- I strongly believe this is possible – while guaranteeing our security and vital interests.
- But **if even an interim agreement** is unobtainable, then we should consider **unilateral steps** in order to place a **wedge** on this extremely dangerous slippery slope towards a **binational** state.
- It involves **demarcating** a line within the land of Israel… Within which we will have the settlement blocs and a **solid** Jewish majority for generations to come.

- Setting security arrangements and a solid Israeli, long-term **military presence** along the River Jordan

- **Rest assured**… our security should not – AND WILL NOT – be compromised under any of these alternatives.
- Tough decisions must be taken; but **it is** possible.

- And as our sages taught us: *"If not now… **when**?"*
- President Abbas – **now is the time** to start talking **<u>without any preconditions</u>**!

- I **strongly** believe that this strategic intertwined triangle:
- First: The Regional Security Framework
- Second: A resumed political process with the Palestinians…
- And third: tackling Iran.
- This is the most effective approach to deal with the challenges on our horizon.
- Israel, surrounded by this geopolitical earthquake, has been experiencing its own tremors of change: A **renaissance** of political **activism**, an **outburst** of **social participation**.
- Just under two years ago we witnessed the people of Israel taking to the streets… demanding a redistribution of the economic and social burden: A fairer slicing of the pie.

- Just last month – **no less than 53** new members of the Knesset were sworn in. That is nearly 50% of the serving members of Knesset **…** (Present company included!)… **OUT**.
- **That** is what I call democracy in action. A democracy *I* can be proud of. A democracy *you* can be proud of.
- Ladies and gentlemen, I was born 71 years ago at the height of World War Two, the crematoria in Europe were working day and night.
- And now I am ending my tenure as the Minister of Defense of **independent Jewish state.**
- I often rub my eyes in disbelief when I look at what we – as a nation – have achieved… all in under 65 years.
- We have an **agile** and **adaptive** high-tech and export oriented economy.
- Our start-up culture flourishes on an ***eruption*** of talent and an underlying entrepreneurial spirit amongst our youth.
- The future is bright, and **my vision for Israel is clear**.

- A **strong**, self-confident, flourishing Jewish, democratic state, living in peace and security with its neighbors.
- An exemplary **state** and world leader in science, technology, education, culture, infrastructure, quality of life and, finally, standard of living.
- A country in which our children will **want** to live.
- A country which you and our children will be PROUD to be associated with.
- Ladies and gentlemen, we are at a **decisive juncture in our history**…
- May we have the **strength** and **courage** to make those tough decisions for the future **peace** and **security** of the State of Israel.
- Please allow me to end with the millennia old blessing

השם עוז לעמו ייתן, השם יברך את עמו בשלום

- May the Lord bestow his people with courage, and may the Lord bless his people with peace.

- Thank you…